



PRESS RELEASE
*Office of the United States Attorney
Middle District of Florida*

PAUL I. PEREZ
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

400 North Tampa Street
Suite 3200
Tampa, Florida 33602
813/274-6000
813/274-6300 (Fax)

300 North Hogan Street
Suite 700
Jacksonville, Florida 32201
904/301-6300
904/301-6310 (Fax)

500 W. Church Street,
Suite 300
Orlando, Florida 32805
407/648-7500
407/648-7643 (Fax)

2110 First Street,
Suite 3-137
Fort Myers, Florida 33901
239/461-2200
239/461-2219 (fax)

Contact: Steve Cole ♦ Public Affairs Specialist ♦ 813/274-6352

For Immediate Release

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MARION COUNTY BANK ROBBER PLEADS GUILTY
IN "PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS" CASE

Ocala, Florida - United States Attorney Paul I. Perez today announced the entry of a guilty plea by **EUGENE BROWN, JR.**, a/k/a Eugene Welcome, a 65-year-old resident of Eustis, Florida, charged with armed bank robbery (Count One) and carrying a firearm during a crime of violence (Count Two). As to Count One, the maximum penalty Brown faces is twenty five years' imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, five years of supervised release and a special assessment of \$100. With regard to Count Two, Brown faces a *consecutive* mandatory minimum term of seven years' imprisonment up to life imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, five years of supervised release and a special assessment of \$100.

According to the facts elicited at the plea hearing, Brown took \$47,147 at gunpoint from the employees of a branch of Colonial Bank located at 11220 SE 179th Place, Summerfield, Florida, on August 4, 2003. During the robbery, Brown assaulted and put in jeopardy the employees' lives by the use of a .38 caliber revolver. After a two-hour

standoff with the Marion County Sheriff's Office SWAT team, Brown surrendered to authorities.

This is another case prosecuted as a part the Department of Justice program "Project Safe Neighborhoods" - a nationwide gun violence reduction initiative with strong support from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives (ATF). United States Attorney Perez is coordinating the cooperative effort here in the Middle District of Florida with federal, state and local law enforcement officials and calling our effort "Project Safe Neighborhoods." The objective is to reduce violent crime by locating and seizing unlawfully possessed guns and then swiftly prosecuting the offenders using both federal and state gun laws.

The case was investigated by the Marion County Sheriff's Office and ATF and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robert E. Bodnar, Jr.